GAMING SAFELY PLAYBOOK:

The Quick Start Guide

For more information on these topics and more, view the full Gaming Safely Playbook at **NCMEC.org/Gaming**

Use this Quick Start Guide to begin exploring key topics from the Gaming Safely Playbook with your children. The conversation starters and recommended guidance in this guide are designed to make talking about gaming safety a little easier. You can also explore the accompanying checklist to help your family get off to a good start as you develop a family gaming plan.

Safety Settings & Parental Controls

Safety settings and parental controls can reduce some risks, but children may still find ways around them or continue conversations on other apps and platforms. Pair these tools with ongoing conversations about where your child communicates, who they interact with and when to ask for help.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Younger	Older
"If the game does not have a chat, what are other ways players can communicate with you?"	*"What are some risks with moving a conversation from a game to a private chat on another platform?"*

GUIDE YOUR CHILD

Younger

- Tell your child to always let you know if another player interacts with them, even if the interaction is not through chat. Remind them that you want to make sure their experiences in games are positive, fun and safe.

Older

- Talk about the risks. Use examples of how offenders ask children to move to another platform, then show romantic interest, offer money or a job. The offender may then ask the child to send a nude picture, sometimes with the intent to blackmail them for money or more pictures or videos. Remind them this is a crime and it is never their fault. Tell them to report it to the CyberTipline.

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Currency, Rewards and Special Events

There are different types of currency and items that offenders will offer children. Examples include, in-game currency, real world money, in-game items, gift cards, cryptocurrency and real-world items or services, such as food/app food delivery, clothing/jewelry, electronics, sex toys, plane tickets, subscriptions and other gifts.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Younger	Older
"Tell me about a time when other players offered you or another gamer something. What happened?"	*"Tell me about a time when someone offered you or a gamer friend a gift or money. Do you think anything could go wrong in a situation like that?"*

GUIDE YOUR CHILD

Younger

- Remind them of the rules and agreements you established before they began playing.
- Reinforce that they should always check with you before accepting anything from another player, even a friend they know offline.
- Let them know that if they want something in the game, you'll decide together whether to purchase it or exchange items with friends.

Older

- Let them know that sometimes people might not see anything wrong with someone offering a gift while playing because they're focused on the game and making friends. They may not think much about the risks or that the person may ask for something in return, like a nude image that they could then use to threaten them.
- Share that people may try to normalize requests for nude images by saying things like "everyone does it," but that isn't true. Research shows that most teens have never sent a nude.
- Share a similar example from when you were a teenager. For example, going to a party and someone you just met offers you a ride.

Gamers, Streamers and the Parasocial Relationship

Teaching children about healthy relationships and grooming behaviors, especially in online games, can help them recognize when someone is crossing boundaries, feel confident responding safely and know where to report the interaction.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Younger	Older
"What can you do if someone in the game asks you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable, even after you asked them to stop?"	*"Tell me about a time when another player wanted a relationship with you or a friend that felt more adult than what you'd normally have with someone your age."*

GUIDE YOUR CHILD

Younger

- Tell them that they should always come to you if someone asks them to do something that makes them feel uncomfortable, or if they're worried the person won't play with them anymore if they say no.
- Reinforce that good friends would not ask them to do things that make them feel uncomfortable, pressure them, or ask them to keep secrets from trusted adults.

Older

- Discuss how a relationship that moves fast can be a sign that the other person does not have the best intentions.
- Reinforce why romantic relationships between adults and minors are never appropriate, even when the age difference is only a few years.

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Grinding Culture, Social and Emotional Dynamics

Gaming is often where children connect with friends, build communities and develop a sense of belonging. Understanding these dynamics can help you support your child and have meaningful conversations about healthy relationships, balance and boundaries.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Younger	Older
"What can you do if your friend is mean to you or another player in a game?"	*"How do you and your friends respond when gamers use bullying, offensive or sexual language towards other gamers?"*

GUIDE YOUR CHILD

Younger

- Remind your child that gaming interactions are supposed to be fun and positive, and they should always tell you if their friends are mean to them or others.

Older

- Discuss how some benefits of playing with others include developing teamwork skills, building good friendships and why friends who are not supportive of others can be a red flag in any friendship.

Online Risks & Asking for Help

Talking about online risks before something goes wrong can help your child feel more prepared to respond. These conversations can also reinforce that they can always come to you or another trusted adult for help without fear of getting in trouble.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Younger	Older
"If something or someone online makes you feel uncomfortable, where can you report it?"	*"What would you do if someone threatened you or a friend with sexual content? Who could you tell, and how would you report it?"*

GUIDE YOUR CHILD

Younger

- Tell them that if someone asks for inappropriate pictures or videos, or sends something that makes them uncomfortable, they should tell a trusted adult right away. Discuss how a trusted adult can help them report the person through the game and to **CyberTipline.org.**

Older

- Discuss what to do if someone threatens them online, including saving messages, reporting the user and telling a trusted adult as soon as possible. Reinforce that complying with demands for content, money, or personal information rarely stops the threats and can lead to additional demands.

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Family Gaming Check List

Use this checklist to build a family gaming plan with your child. Complete it together to set expectations, discuss potential risks and identify strategies that support safe and positive gaming experiences.

Before playing, we will:

- ☐ Choose age-appropriate games.
- ☐ Review privacy settings.
- ☐ Decide who and how your child can communicate while gaming.
- ☐ Come up with goals and responsibilities.
- ☐ Decide where in the house and what times gaming is allowed and not allowed.
- ☐ Create a purchasing plan (budget, ways to earn money, payment methods).
- ☐ Identify your three trusted adults and let them know what you expect from them.
- ☐ Identify emotional regulation strategies.

While playing, we will:

- ☐ Keep personal information private
- ☐ Check in about how the gaming experience is going.
- ☐ Talk to a trusted adult if something feels uncomfortable or raises questions.
- ☐ Take breaks and balance gaming with other activities.
- ☐ Follow our gaming routine.
- ☐ Keep devices out of bedrooms.

If something goes wrong, we will:

- ☐ Know how to block and report someone.
- ☐ Save evidence if needed.
- ☐ Know who to ask for help.
- ☐ Use our emotional regulation exercises.

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